

Johnny Got His Gun: Redux; or, A Near Life Experience

—Jeremy Cox

Youthful exuberance, unmatched and unfounded

Sets a course for destruction and woe.

Once plotted, irreversible

My ship sails for folly, too late to turn back.

I have only to go.

What port is this?

The stars are all backward!

Intrepid youth, spirited so far from home—

Great wonder, great mystery

Death lurking and waiting

Can I keep watch, or will my wits slip away?

Days untold, wind blowing, sun baking

I try to reason, to rhyme, and to know.

Wisdom is folly when madmen take reign.

Order and logic deceive, not direct.

Alone and forsaken

I trust not my comrades

(Nor my opponent)

Who quests for my life

The people I find

All low and dejected.

They hope for nothing

If not to survive

In this I find a sense of belonging,
Brothers of mind, of prayer, and desire.
Longing and wishing
I walk out my days.
My only companions are strangers this way.
Rending and ripping, my heart is removed
—Only a void to carry me through

Out the other side, I stumble and stagger.
White light so pure, so blinding and glorious
Only to find the foul stench of the tomb:
Corpses for kinsmen,
Ghosts form the gentry,
A land of lost souls,
With no place to hide.
Weary, I wonder.
My life is like ash:
Pale, gray, and formless,
No beauty I find.

Home is a word that carries no weight.
Rest is a lie and peace is its yolk.
Love is a riddle,
A game for the mind.
Nothing is real.
No satisfaction to find.

I long for the strangers,

The weak and the weary:
The only true kinsmen I've known in my time.
Oh brothers of loss
With eyes so familiar
How I do miss my comrades of pain.
So strange to find solace in this land of unrest.

Realization—
Rushing and running—
Fighting and clawing—
My eyes open wide.
Brothers of arms do not make brothers of heart;
Fear and oppression is where true blood-kin start.

Brothers, my brothers,
For your love I pray—
Do not desert me, deject me, denounce me—
In my deep heart you will always stay.

Cycles and seasons,
Time goes racing away;
Memories fade, yet lessons remain:
Love and loss, fear and discovery
These are the things I carry today.